

BRIAN SANDOVAL
Governor



STATE OF NEVADA

Women Veterans Advisory Committee

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SUBJECT: Final Report and Recommendations for the Governor from the Nevada Women Veterans Advisory Committee submitted June 1, 2015

Introduction and Executive Summary:

On March 13, 2014, Governor Brian Sandoval established the Nevada Women Veterans Advisory Committee (WVAC) by Executive Order 2014-08. The purpose of the Committee is to support and assist the State Women Veterans Coordinator in locating, educating, and advocating for all Women Veterans in the State of Nevada.

This is the final report prepared by the Committee due to the Governor by June 1, 2015.

Recommendations in this report result from WVAC deliberations conducted during public meetings on July 23, 2014; August 15, 2014; September 3, 2014; October 22, 2014; January 7, 2015; March 4, 2015; March 24, 2015; and May 6, 2015. In accordance with Nevada Open Meeting Law, meeting dates, agendas, and minutes of these meetings are available through the Nevada Department of Veterans Services (NDVS) website. The committee used information from surveys, face-to-face conversations with women veterans, presentations from the NDVS, the U.S. Department of Veterans Service, other organizations, and their personal knowledge/experiences as Women Veterans to develop these recommendations.

In addition to the recommendations offered in this report, WVAC committee members accomplished the following items in support of Women Veterans: (a) WVAC sent a letter of support endorsing the Women Veterans Access to Quality Care Act introduced by U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) and U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), (b) WVAC Chairperson testified before the U.S. Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee at the hearing titled "Fulfilling the Promise to Women Veterans" on April 21, 2015, and (c) WVAC member participated in the roundtable discussion on Women Veterans issues hosted by Congresswoman Dina Titus (NV-1) on May 28, 2015.

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The committee members hope the recommendations that follow will help Veterans and non-veterans alike understand and celebrate the legacy of America's service women, and help create a culture that recognizes and supports the unique needs of Women Veterans. There has been significant progress made towards support of Women Veterans but much remains to be accomplished; the recommendations in this report are intended to continue that momentum.

Guiding principles: As directed by the Executive Order establishing the Women Veterans Advisory Committee, we have made locating, educating, and advocating for all women veterans in Nevada a central focus of our overall efforts to date. Our final recommendations (including those made in our interim report) and endorsements are:

1. Recommend that the Nevada Department of Veterans Services Women Veterans Coordinator be established as a full time position. It is currently staffed as a part-time function. UPDATE: The Nevada Department of Veterans Services hired a full-time Women Veterans Coordinator effective March 16, 2015. This recommendation has been implemented.
2. Recommend that the Women Veterans Advisory Committee be codified in statute as a sub-committee of the Veterans Services Committee (VSC). We suggest that the WVAC consist of a minimum of seven members, two of which represent Women Veterans from rural and frontier areas across the state.
3. Recommend that Nevada Department of Veterans Services continue efforts to develop a Veterans Information System to identify where veterans are located throughout the state so that Veterans (to include Women Veterans) are informed about benefits and opportunities for which they may be eligible.
4. Recommend that State of Nevada agencies who collect Veteran data add the data collection question, "Have you ever served in the United States Military?" to their forms/applications (during the next programmed update) in place of the question "Are you a veteran?" Studies have shown that many Women Veterans do not self-identify as Veterans and asking if they have served will help ensure that their status as a Veteran is identified.
5. Recommend Governor Sandoval encourage U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and State of Nevada initiatives to provide or expand tele-health programs for Women Veterans in rural areas.
6. Recommend Governor Sandoval communicate to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs the need for a full time Obstetrician/Gynecologist at the Southern Nevada Veterans Medical Center so that Women Veterans' needs are met. UPDATE: A full-time gynecologist was hired at the Southern Nevada Veterans Medical Center effective March 8, 2015. This recommendation has been implemented.

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7. Recommend that Nevada Department of Veterans Services develop a white paper in collaboration with the Women Veterans Advisory Committee that informs legislators and State Agencies of facts regarding Nevada's Women Veterans, to include demographics, their contributions to national and state security, and unique needs of this population. This information may help reduce misinformation and improve Women Veteran programming support.
8. Recommend that Nevada Department of Veterans Services develop a Women Veterans training module to be included in the training for Nevada Veterans Advocates and the Nevada Veterans Service Officers.
9. Recommend that Nevada Department of Veterans Services develop a strategic communications plan that includes how to reach Women Veterans throughout the state.
10. The Women Veterans Advisory Committee endorses the efforts of the Nevada System of Higher Education in developing Veterans support programs and on-campus Veterans Support Centers in Nevada to support Nevada Veterans.
11. As of September 30, 2014, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimated the female veteran population within the state of Nevada to be 21,362. To date, the Nevada Department of Veterans Services has identified approximately 2,500 female veterans or only 11.7% of the estimated total. This indicates that Nevada could do a better job of identifying and recognizing its female Veteran population. To do this, Governor Sandoval should provide funding and direct the NDVS to conduct a campaign to identify Women Veterans through a message to be distributed through a variety of means. The recommended message is as follows: Attention women in the State of Nevada: If you have ever served in the United States military, you may be eligible for benefits. Please call 123-456-7890 or go to this website <http://www.veterans.nv.gov/> to get further information. NDVS should establish a telephone line/number solely for reaching Women Veterans. This telephone line should have voicemail with a message established telling the caller to leave their name and phone number so that they can be contacted. The NDVS Women Veterans Coordinator would then be responsible for returning the phone calls. All reasonable means should be used to publicize this message. The most effective and least costly should be the first means to publicize this message. One of the best ways to reach veterans is through the state veterans organizations' newsletters. The second means to be used should be a public service announcement via radio, television, and newspaper inserts focused on veterans. Once a phone line has been established, NDVS should then contact each Veteran organization and request they publish the message in their upcoming newsletters. Other possible means of distributing the message include the Chamber of

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Commerce, women's networking organizations, local newspapers, and television stations. Every effort should be made to reach the rural and frontier communities.

12. On October 8, 2014, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs directed all Veterans Affairs healthcare and benefits facilities to continue to hold quarterly town hall events to improve communication with, and hear directly from, Veterans nationwide. Evidence indicates that some of these town hall meetings have not been widely publicized so that Veterans are not aware of the meetings. Recommend Governor Sandoval direct the Nevada Veterans healthcare and benefits facilities to use all means possible to publicize these town hall events so that every Veteran is aware of this opportunity. These organizations should be directed to publish summaries of these meetings on their websites to ensure the information is passed on to Veterans who were unable to attend the meetings. NVDS should be directed to post on their website a summary of topics addressed at the town hall meetings. Additionally, NDVS should post on their website a summary of the comments/questions addressed at each town hall meeting conducted in the state. Additionally, if answers to all questions were not available during the town hall, the questions and answers obtained later should be published as soon as they are available.
13. To support Women Veterans' academic goals, NDVS should determine if there are any scholarships targeted specifically at Women Veterans through Veteran organizations. If none are available, work with Veteran organizations to establish. If scholarships for Women Veterans are available, publicize this information on the NDVS website.
14. The Green Zone Network should be a one-stop shop for Veterans seeking employment assistance. Additional staffing is needed for the Green Zone Network to assist with the employee side of the employment assistance. This should include connecting Veterans with organizations that can provide assistance with writing resumes and translating military skills to civilian jobs. While the Green Zone Network website allows employers to post job opportunities, an additional staff member could reach out to other potential employers to expand and enhance the opportunities available.
15. The Nevada Department of Veteran Services should be directed to add a definition of who a Veteran is to the homepage for their website. Committee members have come across numerous Veterans (both men and women) who do not think they are a Veteran. Veterans in the state must be educated on who is a Veteran.
16. Currently there is no requirement for Veterans to identify themselves as a Veteran when applying for unemployment benefits. Recommend Governor Sandoval direct the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR) to add a question to all state applications for information, services, and benefits during

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their next programmed update. The question to be added is: Have you ever served in the United States Military? By asking this question, the state should be able to better connect veterans to veterans' benefits and opportunities.

17. Direct the Nevada Department of Veterans Services to post feel good stories regarding Women Veterans on their website as well as other social media outlets to publicize, recognize, and raise awareness about the good things Women Veterans are doing.

Biographies for each of the Governor's appointees to the Committee can be found in Appendix A of this report.

Appendix A

Women Veterans Advisory Committee Biographies

Chair of Committee – Dr. Anne Davis – Retired Army Colonel/Reno

Dr. Anne Davis is a native of Michigan. She graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1982 earning a Bachelor of Science degree and a commission as a second lieutenant in the Ordnance Corps. She served in the Army for 29 years in various locations and positions. She commanded the Hawthorne Army Depot from 2000-2002, a government-owned, contractor-operated (GOCO) ammunition depot located in Hawthorne, Nevada. Anne Davis earned an MBA from Harvard Business School in 1991 and her Ph.D. in Business from The City University of New York in 2005. She is currently a member of the faculty for Walden University's Doctor of Business Administration Program.

Sharlee W. Smith – Retired Army Lieutenant Colonel/Reno

Charley enlisted in the US Army as a Private First Class on 19 Dec 1981; and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel on 31 May 2006. Her education includes a Bachelor's Degree, a Master's Degree, and completion of the US Army Command & General Staff College. Her highest military award is the Legion of Merit. Charley is an avid volunteer for Veterans and serves in the following organizations and volunteer programs – current Sixth Region President and life member of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA); Charter Member of the Women In Military Service for America (WIMSA); life member of the Reserve Officers Association (ROA); life member of the National Guard Association (NGAUS); life member of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV); life member of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA); only Veteran volunteer for the VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System Women Veterans Health Committee; and appointed in 2010 by the Nevada Governor for the Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery Committee (Fernley). Her chosen passion is ballroom dancing and is her current profession, where she teaches and performs in the Northern Nevada area.

Anthoneal Newman – VA/Army Reserve E-4 Specialist/Las Vegas

Mrs. Anthoneal Newman is an Operation Enduring Freedom Veteran who served in the United States Army Reserves for eight years and was deployed to Bosnia in 2004 - 2005. While in the military, she worked as an Administrative Assistant, Human Resource Specialist, and Postal Clerk. She obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice and a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Troy University. Mrs. Newman began her career with the Department of Veteran Affairs as a Veteran Service Representative (VSR) at the Montgomery Regional Office in April of 2009. Mrs. Newman accepted employment in Las Vegas, NV on August of 2014 to become the first VetSuccess on Campus Counselor (VSOC) in Nevada.

Bobi Pike-Oates – Women Veterans of Nevada Association/Retired Air Force Senior Master Sergeant/Las Vegas

Roberta Pike Oates (Bobi) U. S. Air Force, retired aircraft maintenance Senior Master Sergeant, 23 years of service. She was handpicked as one of four individuals to stand up the Air Force first Remote Piloted Aircraft Predator Squadron at Creech AFB. As Production Superintendent for the 11th Reconnaissance Squadron she led the initial Air Force Cadre of Maintenance personnel through training at the UAV training center at Fort Huachuca, AZ, then on to Taszér, Hungary for the first Air Force Deployment in support of Operation Joint Endeavor. During her Air Force career she served at several overseas and stateside bases in various Aircraft Maintenance positions. She also deployed to Incirlik Air Base, Turkey in support of Operation Provide Comfort. After retiring from the Air Force she was a Branch Manager for Armed Forces Bank at Nellis AFB.

Bobi has lived in Nevada for 20 years. She is a member of the Women Veterans of Nevada Ceremonial team, and a board member. A life member of the Air Forces Association; a Charter Member of the Women in Military Service for America; Air Force Sergeants Association; American Legion; Veterans of Foreign Wars; and a life member of the Disabled American Veterans.

Bobi holds a BS in Business Management, AA in Aircraft Maintenance, AS in Law Enforcement, Certificates in Paralegal Studies and Banking.

Her awards include Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, 57th Wing, Nellis AFB and Resource Advisor of the Year Air Warfare Center, Nellis AFB.

Lesli Ellis – Retired Marine Corps Master Sergeant/Elko

Lesli Ellis joined the U.S. Marine Corps in February 1987 as a Marine Corps Integrated Maintenance Management Clerk. After completing her first overseas tour at Camp Kinser, Okinawa, Japan she was stationed at Camp Pendleton, California. Here she made a lateral move to become a print journalist. In 1995, she was transferred to Recruiting Station San Francisco for duty in marketing in public affairs. In 1998 she returned to Camp Pendleton to serve as Press Chief, Media Chief and Internal Operations Chief. She was deployed to Egypt in 1999 for Exercise Bright Star 99/00. She then transferred to MCRD Parris Island to serve as the public affairs chief for the 9th Marine Corps District and was later reassigned to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan as the Station's public affairs chief. In 2007, she became the public affairs chief for Marine Forces Pacific stationed at Camp Smith, Hawaii. During her tour at MarForPac, she deployed to the Philippines for Exercise Balikatan twice, Thailand for Exercise Cobra Gold twice and Australia for Exercise Talisman Saber. She retired as a Master Sergeant in Oct. 2010 after 23 years of service. After retirement, she accepted a position as the public affairs specialist for the Bureau of Land Management in Elko, Nevada.